

Kentucky Community and Technical College System Special Initiative

The University Center of the Mountains

What is the University Center of the Mountains?

The University Center of the Mountains brings together a range of postsecondary providers to give citizens of southeast Kentucky direct access to four-year postsecondary education. The absence of a conveniently located university has limited access in this region to bachelor's and master's degrees and has contributed in part to low educational attainment levels in the region. The UCM is a model that may be replicated in other rural portions of the state which have been left behind in access to postsecondary opportunities.

Why is a program like this needed?

The Kentucky River Area Development District (KRADD) has the lowest percentage of bachelor's degrees in the state, yet it has one of the highest percentages of enrollment in the community and technical college system (KCTCS). This indicates that these citizens have historically been denied reasonable access to upper-division and graduate coursework. In fact, two surveys done in 2003 and 2004 confirm this point. Ninety-two percent of Hazard Community and Technical College students and 71 percent of 1,000 community members surveyed said they would take bachelor's courses through the UCM.

What institutions were the originating partners for the UCM?

The Kentucky Community and Technical College System, Hazard Community and Technical College, Eastern Kentucky University, and Morehead State University signed the original UCM agreement in July 2002. An independent institution, Lindsey Wilson College, joined in July 2004.

Has UCM grown since 2002?

Local support for the Center is strong. In 2003, the Hazard Independent College Foundation raised \$130,000 in pledges to support the start of the UCM. And the following year the Perry County Fiscal Court provided \$1 million from coal severance tax revenue to support the Center. A 5,800 square foot administrative office building made possible through an Appalachian Regional Commission grant was dedicated in June 2005. In just two years, UCM enrollment has grown to approximately 300 students enrolled in 15 degree programs.

What is the Council's request?

The Council seeks \$900,000 of recurring funds in FY 2007-08 to support the University Center of the Mountains.



Photo source: Kentucky Adult Education

One Mission: Better Lives for Kentucky's People